



2025 Northern Vietnam Epic Volunteer Adventure

Explore the mystical Old Quarter of Hanoi (but in a slightly different way..)!

Live like a local while you build a house near stunning Sapa in northern Vietnam

Spend 3.5 days on motorbikes as you traverse mountain ranges, divert through remote villages and learn about many of the 54 ethnic minority groups in Vietnam

Deliver life changing water tanks to tiny villages and visit our very own Library House education project in Duong Thuong town

Spend 2 days relaxing in Tam Coc, also known as Halong Bay on Land

Join us in April 2025 for this epic adventure around Northern Vietnam.

So, what makes it unique? No e3 Global Adventure can ever be called ordinary! Every single adventure is different and we specialise in offering experiences which you will not find on any other travel companies itineraries!

This trip will take you away from the usual tourist experience. You will build a house for a family in need near Sapa - high in the hills close to the border of China. While you do this you will be living with a local family - enjoying their food, learning about their culture and developing an insight into their way of life.

Move on to Bac Ha and enjoy the spectacle of one of the best ethnic markets in South East Asia, before jumping on the back of motor scooters to explore some of the most spectacular scenery and remote villages in Vietnam. Along the way you will deliver supplies to communities and schools - water tanks, eyeglasses and educational equipment.

Finish the trip with a couple of days relaxing in Tam Coc, renown for its stunning limestone karst rock formations, boat rides and welcoming homestays.

Talk about an epic, unforgettable volunteer adventure..!

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Detailed Itinerary and Trip Notes

Itinerary subject to change without notice

Day 1 Arrive Hanoi, transfer to hotel

Sunday 13th April

Today is arrival day in Hanoi. Transfer to our small hotel in the vibrant Old Quarter and enjoy a rest before the busy itinerary kicks off! If you have time, enjoy a walk to nearby Hoan Kiem Lake and see a glimpse of local life as residents of all ages take part in various recreational pursuits including jogging, tai chi and line dancing. Later this afternoon we will have our first group meeting before enjoying dinner at a local restaurant near the hotel.

Day 2 Hanoi city tour, KOTO visit, overnight train to Sapa

Monday 14th April

It's time to begin exploring the delightful capital city of Vietnam! In typical E3 style we like to do things a little differently so it's time to jump on the back of motor scooters and explore some of the lesser known highlights of Hanoi. It is certainly a city tour with a difference! Included in the tour is a delicious local lunch and a visit to a traditional coffee house. After some free time in the afternoon it is time to pack and head to dinner. This evening we will dine at KOTO - Know One Teach One. KOTO was founded by Vietnamese Australian Jimmy Pham. Seeing the plight of local disadvantaged children he set up the hospitality training school to give the kids a second chance. Now KOTO operates in both Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi and the restaurants have secured a solid reputation for the quality of their food and service. After enjoying our dinner and learning a little about this social enterprise we prepare to board the sleeper train to head north to Lao Cai, right on the border of China. (B, L)

Day 3 Arrive Lao Cai, transfer to Sapa, trek to homestay

Tuesday 15th April

You will have no choice but to be up bright and early this morning as the train arrives in Lao Cai city at around 5am! The 30 minute transfer by minibus provides a glimpse of the spectacular landscapes that surround the hill town of Sapa. Many of Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority groups reside in this area and as you get closer to the main town you will see locals still sporting their own customary clothing including headpieces. After a freshen up and some breakfast it is time to begin our trek to the location of the house building project. The 8 or so kilometre walk provides some beautiful landscape vistas. You will begin to understand a little about the way of life in this agricultural area and develop a respect for the way the locals go about their business. After enjoying a local lunch along the way, we arrive at our Red Dao homestay accommodation. This afternoon we will meet the family we will be building a house for - learning about the hardships they have faced which have forced them into extreme poverty. We will visit their current house and learn about how the project will proceed over the next two days. This evening we will enjoy the hospitality of our host family and there will be time to relax before 'hitting the tools' early tomorrow morning! (B, L, D)

Day 4 Sapa - house building project

Wednesday 16th April

Today is the first day of our house building project. You will work alongside local tradespeople to construct a modest house for our beneficiary family. Tasks will include assisting with the construction of the timber frame, bricklaying and mixing mortar. We will rotate the jobs and you will soon find a role which suits. And please don't worry about lack of experience with building! Our trusted guides Ken and Tuan make sure that everyone has plenty of support with their jobs and are always on hand to help out. Our homestay family will ensure that we are well fuelled for work and frequent rests will mean we are able to work well into the late afternoon. This afternoon or evening, before dinner, we may have the opportunity to run the first of our 'eye camps'. Our homestay owner, Ma May, has requested assistance with providing the local women with eyeglasses - mostly reading glasses - to assist them with their embroidery work. (B, L, D).

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Day 5 Sapa - house building project

Thursday 17th April

The second day of our house building project begins! After a sound sleep it is time to spend another day working to change someone's life. We will continue our project well into the afternoon. By now, the house will be well on the way to being built and it's time to hand the project over to its new owner and local tradesmen for completion. Today will be an emotional day as we come to realise the impact we have made. There will be tears and farewells as we say goodbye to our recipient family. Tonight we will enjoy a celebration meal (and perhaps a little rice wine) with our homestay family as we prepare to leave early tomorrow morning. You may also enjoy the chance to experience a traditional Red Dao herbal bath - a truly unique way to relax after a long day! (B, L, D)

Day 6 Return trek to Sapa, afternoon free

Friday 18th April

It's time to say goodbye to our homestay family this morning as we begin our return journey back to Sapa town. Before we do so we will have the opportunity to experience our very own Red Dao 'mini-market' as many of the local ladies display their wares for your perusal. There's no pressure to make a purchase - just enjoy the experience! The Sapa Elegance Hotel awaits and a little comfort will be most welcome! This afternoon is a time for you to kick back and relax, enjoy the cafes of Sapa, have a massage or perhaps do some shopping. (B).

Day 7 Sapa free morning, afternoon to Bac Ha

Saturday 19th April

Today we have a free morning in Sapa. Check out the local shops for the latest North Face outdoor gear, book a trekking, mountain bike or motorbike tour or just kick back and relax in one of the local coffee shops. If the weather is clear a trip to the top of SE Asia's highest mountain Fansipan by cable car is a great option. Sapa has a chilled mountain town vibe and today is your chance to enjoy it! Later on this afternoon we will travel by bus to Bac Ha town, staying in basic hotel accommodation and enjoying a local dinner (B,D).

Day 8 Bac Ha market, bus to Ha Giang, motorbike to Nam Dam

Sunday 20th April

Wake up with the roosters this morning as we get up early to enjoy the stunning sight of Bac Ha market. Renown as one of the best ethnic markets in SE Asia you will see myriad ethnic minority people, dressed in their traditional clothes, as they trade their produce, catch up with friends and purchase goods for the forthcoming week. Mid-morning we begin the bus journey to Ha Giang - a river city high in the mountains not far from the Chinese border. Here we consolidate our luggage and hit the motorbikes once again! A support van will carry the donated supplies which will be purchased prior to our arrival. It will also carry our luggage and provide the chance for a comfortable seat during the course of the motorbike journey, should the 'sore bum' become a little too much! Our first day on the bike is intentionally short - 30km or around 1.5 hours - yes, the roads are windy and sometimes rough, hence the slow travel times! Tonight we stop at the little Black Dao village of Nam Dam and stay in a local village homestay. Once again we will enjoy the hospitality of the homestay owners including a traditional feast of local produce. (B, L, D).

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Day 9 Motorbike Nam Dam to Dong Van

Monday 21st April

Get ready for your first full day on the bikes! After breakfast it's time to prepare for a full day of adventure! Leaving Nam Dam we head for the tiny village of Hop Tien in Quan Ba district. Here we find Vang Thi Mai - founder of an internationally recognised hemp linen production co-operative. We have the opportunity to observe Ms Mai and her team produce linen fabrics and products and learn about the processes involved. Of course, there is an opportunity to purchase some of their beautiful products as well. Moving on we stop for a local lunch in Yen Minh town, before having multiple stops for magnificent photo opportunities. In the afternoon we stop at the Hmong King's Palace, ancient villa of King Vuong Chinc Duc, which was created by Chinese stone artists from Yunnan assisted by skilful Hmong builders. If we have time we may stop at a small school near Dong Van town to deliver some educational supplies and meet some of the children. They are very shy to begin with but it doesn't take long before you start to see some smiles. A short ride later and we reach our comfortable Hmong homestay for the night. (B L, D)

Day 10 Motorbike Dong Van to Du Gia

Tuesday 22nd April

It's a long day on the bike today, on some of the roughest but also most spectacular roads of our trip so far! An early start sees us heading straight for the Ma Pi Leng pass. The narrow paths with steep drop offs are not for the faint hearted (optional activity) but the views do reward the brave! After enjoying a caphe sua da (iced coffee with sweet milk) at a panoramic viewpoint (which also has the best toilet view we've ever seen) it's on to another school visit to drop off supplies. Driving past the Meo Vac love market (we will explain that on the trip) we head towards one of our projects - overseeing the distribution of water tanks. Many villages in the area are situated in picturesque valleys. However, they are often built on a base of solid rock which means growing rice is out of the question and other crops are marginal. Villagers live hand to mouth and struggle to grow the food they need, let alone feed for their animals. Water is also an issue during the dry season as the villagers have no means of storing water captured during the winter. Consequently they often have to walk many kilometres to get water and even then it is often muddy or contaminated. Our 'Let's Get Tanked' project aims to equip as many households as possible with a stainless steel water tank so that the families can access clean, safe drinking water year round. Today we will be delivering those tanks, along with other supplies such as food and blankets. The village chief will help us to distribute the supplies to the most needy in the village. After lunch we keep riding towards our next homestay, at the Tay village of Du Gia. (B, L, D)

Day 11 Motorbike Du Gia to Ha Giang

Wednesday 23rd April

It's a slightly shorter day on the bikes today but we do have a special visit to make..! After a later start from the homestay we head back towards Ha Giang city. A short drive from Dong Van we will take a detour and stop at Duong Thuong village - home to our very own education project 'The Library House'. This community education centre aims to engage children with learning and encourage parents to value education. Although the Library House is only open on weekends we will visit the centre and learn about the work it undertakes. On to the bikes once again, we will have breaks along the way for photos before moving on to a lunch stop. We should roll in to Ha Giang city around mid-afternoon with plenty of time to check into the basic but very clean and comfortable Royal Hotel, relax with a hot shower, hit one of the local coffee shops across the road and generally unwind after our mega motorbike adventure! Ha Giang is an attractive city which hasn't yet been 'converted' to cater for the western tourist trade. Where you dine tonight is up to you. There are plenty of local options (noodles, rice) or you can come with us and hit the lonely pizza shop around 15 minutes walk from the hotel. The choice is yours! (B, L)

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Day 12 Ha Giang to Tam Coc

Thursday 24th April

After our epic motorbike trip you will need a little rest. A leisurely bus trip down to Tam Coc will provide the opportunity to kick back, relax and sleep a little. There will be regular stops along the way before arriving into Tam Coc later in the day. Our little homestay is the perfect place for us to rest, relax and also reflect on the journey of the last 10 days. We are welcomed by the beautiful Nam and her husband Nam to their clean and comfortable space. And did we mention the pool - oh yes, isn't that a welcome treat for the last few days of our trip! The rest of the day and evening is free. (B)

Day 13 Tam Coc

Friday 25th April

Famous for its magnificent limestone karst scenery the area around Tam Coc is a visual feast - it is also known as the 'Halong Bay on Land'. Tam Coc town itself has a very relaxed backpacker vibe so it is the perfect spot to enjoy the sights but also relax in a café, enjoy a cocktail and watch the comings and goings of the town. There's lots to see and do here - jump on the back of a motorbike and head for the Trang An area where you can enjoy several different boat rides around and under the karsts, visiting pagodas and caves along the way. On one of the routes you can also visit the site made famous in the King Kong The Skull Island movie. Along with boat rides you can visit Mua Caves for spectacular scenery (we won't talk about the 500 steps to get there), Hoa Lu ancient site and national parks. If you're after something a little closer to the homestay you can always walk to the Tam Coc boat harbour and enjoy a couple of hours on the water exploring the Tam Coc karsts. There really is plenty to see and do here so it will be up to you how much you wish to 'get amongst it' or, alternatively, relax in the swimming pool at the homestay! (B)

Day 14 Tam Coc - free day in Tam Coc

Saturday 26th April

This is your last full day in Vietnam to enjoy the sights of the area, the local food and the Vietnamese hospitality! Tonight we enjoy a final group dinner at one of the local restaurants or perhaps we will organise a local BBQ with our hosts Nam and Nam. Either way, it will be a final opportunity to share our memories and reflect on the difference you have made to the lives of others. (B)

Day 15 Tam Coc - Hanoi airport

Sunday 27th April

It's time to say goodbye today - to your fellow travellers, to our homestay hosts and also (possibly) to Vietnam. After an early breakfast it's time to jump on the bus and head straight for Noi Bai International airport for your journey home. For those of you staying in Vietnam a little longer, or on a later flight, it is easy to transfer back from the airport to Hanoi city. (B)

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Our Philosophy

Our aim is to link travellers with ethical and socially responsible experiences, opportunities and organisations. Wherever we can we stay in local guesthouses, run by local people. We will guide you to fair trade shops, to cafes run with a social justice focus as well as link you with opportunities to give back to the local community you are visiting. At e3 Global Adventures every itinerary we create incorporates a social justice or community service project. That's because we believe that great travel experiences are created by our (and your) connection with local people. Indeed, that's what you will remember most about your trip!!

Physical Demands

This particular itinerary is quite physically demanding. Participants will be 'on the move' most days, rarely staying in the same place for longer than one night. For many people this will be quite a challenge! The motorbike trip, in particular, is quite tiring and we have ensured that the support vehicle will be available for any guest that needs a break from the bike. On saying that, with the challenge comes huge rewards - the places you will see, the people you will meet and the lives you will change..

Your Guides

Nic and Pam from e3 Global Adventures will be your guides for this volunteer project trip. Both are experienced travellers and tour leaders who use their personal connections with local people and communities across South East Asia to make your travel experience unique. We will be accompanied by our local guides and trusted partners Ken and Tuan for most of the trip. Ken and Tuan have worked with e3 Global Adventures for a number of years. They bring excellent local knowledge, care of the group and a fantastic sense of humour!

Your Volunteer Experience

Without doubt your volunteer experience will truly be the highlight of your trip! Unlike most volunteer tour organisers we believe that the local communities are in the best position to identify projects which are of real value to them. We work closely with organisations in-country to work out how we can best assist. We do not believe in 'hand outs' and we certainly don't promote orphanage tourism with any of our project trips. However, we do believe that every one of our travellers can help to improve the education, health care or quality of life of people in the communities that we visit. Your experience will connect you with these communities and we encourage you to maintain contact and support for these projects, if you wish. Our major project on this trip is to build a house for a family in the Sapa region. The family is identified by local leaders to be the most worthy to benefit from our support. The work will be physical but no special skills are required so if you are a novice at bricklaying you won't be alone! In Ha Giang province, where nearly 20% of the population live in absolute poverty, we will be supporting several of the local schools with educational supplies (as requested by the teachers themselves) in addition to blankets and warm clothing for some of the villages. In one village we will be co-ordinating the 'Let's Get Tanked' project - with the aim of delivering water storage tanks to the some of the most impoverished families in the area. We will also be visiting our own local education project - The Library House in Duong Thuong village which supports engagement in education for both children and their parents. Finally, this trip will be the first where we trial our 'eye camp' program. With the help of village leaders as well as commune health professionals we will have the capacity to deliver both reading and prescription glasses to villagers in need. The potential impact of these glasses is life-changing for the recipients. Seeing to be able to earn money, seeing to be able to read and learn. Simple things can make such a difference and you will see this first hand during your journey.



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Your Project Contribution

We ask each participant to contribute \$400AUD towards our volunteer projects. Every dollar of this tax deductible amount goes towards the projects that you will be supporting. Many of our travellers choose to fundraise this amount in their workplace or within their networks - cake stalls, mini-raffles, flower sales... you name it, our travellers have done it!!

Accommodation

All hotel accommodation on this trip is booked on a double or twin share basis. Please ask about single supplements. In Hanoi we stay at a small, comfortable hotel conveniently located in the Old Quarter. Wake up in the morning, walk out the front door and be greeted by 'Old Hanoi' at it's best - narrow alleyways bustling with the morning activities! Our overnight train journey to Sapa will be in a comfortable air conditioned, fourth berth sleeper. In Sapa we will be living with a local family - think mattress and mosquito net in a shared room with shared, basic bathroom but this is life as a local! This experience will make our stay at the very comfortable Sapa Elegance Hotel even more enjoyable! During the motorbike trip we stay at ethnic minority homestays of varying comfort levels which again will make the Royal Hotel in Ha Giang seem like a palace! At Tam Coc we will again be staying with a family but it is more of a mini-hotel, complete with a small but very clean swimming pool - the perfect spot to kick back and enjoy a sun downer!

A Culinary Adventure

Without doubt the food in Vietnam always proves to be a highlight! Enjoy traditional pho soup for breakfast in Hanoi and maybe banh mi or bun bo for lunch. Our meals at our Sapa homestay are sure to be a highlight and we can also help in the preparation of the traditional family feasts. There are many café and restaurant options in Sapa town but, after that, as we really are heading off the beaten track for some of our journey, much of the food will be very local! Of course ca phe sua da is on offer pretty much everywhere and soft drinks/beer are also widely available. Tam Coc will offer the opportunity for a more diverse dining experience once again with local BBQ's being very popular here!

Tour Cost & Inclusions

Cost: \$2 499 AUD (single supplement add \$300)

Includes: Tour leaders from Hanoi
Transfers Noi Bai airport to Hanoi city
All accommodation
All breakfasts, other meals as per itinerary
Hanoi City motorbike tour
Train and bus transport as described
3.5 day motorbike tour
Project organisation

Tour Exclusions

Excludes: Flights to and from Hanoi
Visas
Travel insurance
Some meals
Activities not mentioned in the itinerary
Drinks and tips
Project donation \$400AUD payable prior to departure

The Next Step..!

Need more info....or ready for your adventure...? Contact us today!

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